*Library*Net

making the Internet work for you

Libraries are perfectly positioned to deliver the advantages of the Internet to Canadians. Libraries are found across the country – 97 percent of Canadians have access to a library; libraries are highly regarded – Canadians make more than 200 million visits every year; and library staff are skilled in using technology to manage information.

That's why the Internet is an ideal opportunity for Canada's 3500 libraries to expand their services and to realize the ongoing benefits – to libraries and library users alike – of connecting to the Information Highway.

By providing users with the opportunity to access and use computer and Internet applications, libraries can breathe fresh life into community development and support local economic renewal.

LibraryNet is a partnership of Industry Canada, provincial/territorial governments, library associations and Canadian libraries. LibraryNet is committed to helping all libraries realize the potential of the Internet and to making Canada the most connected nation in the world by the year 2000.

LibraryNet's goals are to:

- facilitate the connectivity of Canada's 3500 public libraries to the Information Highway;
- provide Canadians with affordable access to the Internet through our public libraries; and
- promote the use of the Information Highway in libraries for lifelong learning and community and economic development.

The place to be

Providing public access to the Internet is changing the culture and image of the library.

Libraries are making new friends, especially young ones. One librarian reports children "hauling in their parents" to introduce them to the Internet.

"The busiest place in town," is how a librarian in a small and isolated community described her workplace after it introduced public access to the Internet.

But the Internet does more than attract new people – it attracts new opportunities.

Internet services are leading to new partnerships with businesses, economic and community development groups, municipal, provincial and federal governments, employment and training centres, the media, educational institutions and others.

Increasingly, libraries with Internet access are viewed as "the place to be." They are perceived as dynamic and vibrant, in step with the needs of a modern and changing community.

Key applications

Among the many Internet services offered by libraries, employment opportunities are among the most popular. One librarian goes so far as to describe federal government job information on the Net as "thunderously popular."

In fact, using the Internet's links to Human Resources Development Canada, the National Graduate Register (**http://ngr.schoolnet.ca**), and other key sites frequently rewards library users with jobs.

An electrician, seeking work in another community, used the Net at his library to find a job and the house he wanted.

Even library staff members are finding that opening files can open doors. Young people hired for short periods to provide training and technical services have found subsequent

employment as a direct result of their experience at public libraries.

Economic growth

The Internet provides libraries with an opportunity to enhance their relationship with the business community, adding to their traditional strength in educational and cultural services.

Libraries and their clients have used the Internet to:

- conduct market research that banks require to make small loans to business (extensive resources are found on sites such as Industry Canada's *Strategis*);
- track down products and suppliers for retail businesses (one retailer found a supplier for a German clock his store once stocked – today, the product is back on his shelf);
- assess the competition for businesses looking to expand into new markets (one library did just that for a client with a successful metalworking business);
- train small business people to meet the new requirements of employers and clients (one library taught a real estate agent how to send text and photos of new listings to her head office); and
- create Web pages (tourism businesses are among the heaviest users of this service).

Lifelong learning

Public access to the Internet has applications in areas such as:

- distance education (students can pursue higher education without leaving home);

- access to current information (in one isolated community where daily newspapers arrive a day late, many people read the day's on-line newspapers at the library);
- skills development (a woman who first used the Net to follow figure skating competitions wound up taking a course in home page design);
- independent learning (after some basic training, many users can find what they want without the assistance of library staff).

For more information about LibraryNet and how it can help you, contact:

Industry Canada
Telephone: 1-800-268-6608
Fax: (613) 941-1296
Internet: **http://www.schoolnet.ca/ln-rb**
e-mail: **ln-rb@schoolnet.ca**

Industry Canada   Industrie Canada   Canada